

Classic Poetry Series

George Chapman

- poems -

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A Coronet for his Mistress, Philosophy

Muses that sing love's sensual empery,
And lovers kindling your enraged fires
At Cupid's bonfires burning in the eye,
Blown with the empty breath of vain desires;
You that prefer the painted cabinet
Before the wealthy jewels it doth store ye,
That all your joys in dying figures set,
And stain the living substance of your glory;
Abjure those joys, abhor their memory,
And let my love the honour'd subject be
Of love, and honour's complete history.
Your eyes were never yet let in to see
The majesty and riches of the mind,
But dwell in darkness; for your god is blind.

George Chapman

Bridal Song

O COME, soft rest of cares! come, Night!
Come, naked Virtue's only tire,
The reaped harvest of the light
Bound up in sheaves of sacred fire.
Love calls to war:
Sighs his alarms,
Lips his swords are,
The field his arms.

Come, Night, and lay thy velvet hand
On glorious Day's outfacing face;
And all thy crowned flames command
For torches to our nuptial grace.
Love calls to war:
Sighs his alarms,
Lips his swords are,
The field his arms.

George Chapman

The Seventeenth Book Of Homer's Odysseys

...
Such speech they chang'd; when in the yard there lay
A dog, call'd Argus, which, before his way
Assum'd for Ilion, Ulysses bred,
Yet stood his pleasure then in little stead,
As being too young; but, growing to his grace,
Young men made choice of him for every chace,
Or of their wild goats, of their hares, or harts.
But his king gone, and he, now past his parts,
Lay all abjectly on the stable's store,
Before the oxstall, and mules' stable door,
To keep the clothes cast from the peasants' hands,
While they laid compass on Ulysses' lands;
The dog, with ticks (unlook'd-to) over-grown.
But by this dog no sooner seen but known
Was wise Ulysses, who new enter'd there,
Up went his dog's laid ears, and, coming near,
Up he himself rose, fawn'd, and wagg'd his stern,
Couch'd close his ears, and lay so; nor discern
Could evermore his dear-lov'd lord again.
Ulysses saw it, nor had power t' abstain
From shedding tears; which (far-off seeing his swain)
He dried from his sight clean; to whom he thus
His grief dissembled: "'Tis miraculous,
That such a dog as this should have his lair
On such a dunghill, for his form is fair.
And yet, I know not, if there were in him
Good pace, or parts, for all his goodly limb;
Or he liv'd empty of those inward things,
As are those trencher-beagles tending kings,
Whom for their pleasure's, or their glory's sake,
Or fashion, they into their favour take."

"This dog," said he, "was servant to one dead
A huge time since. But if he bore his head,
For form and quality, of such a height,
As when Ulysses, bound for th' Ilion fight,
Or quickly after, left him, your rapt eyes
Would then admire to see him use his thighs
In strength and swiftness. He would nothing fly,
Nor anything let scape; if once his eye
Seiz'd any wild beast, he knew straight his scent;
Go where he would, away with him he went.
Nor was there ever any savage stood
Amongst the thickets of the deepest wood
Long time before him, but he pull'd him down;
As well by that true hunting to be shown
In such vast coverts, as for speed of pace
In any open lawn. For in deep chace
He was a passing wise and well-nos'd hound.
And yet is all this good in him uncrown'd
With any grace here now; nor he more fed

Than any errant cur. His king is dead,
Far from his country; and his servants are
So negligent they lend his hound no care.
Where masters rule not, but let men alone,
You never there see honest service done.
That man's half virtue Jove takes quite away,
That once is sun-burn'd with the servile day."
This said, he enter'd the well-built towers,
Up bearing right upon the glorious wooers,
And left poor Argus dead; his lord's first sight
Since that time twenty years bereft his light.

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George Chapman

The Shadow Of Night

...

Fall, Hercules, from heaven, in tempests hurl'd,
And cleanse this beastly stable of the world;
Or bend thy brazen bow against the Sun,
As in Tartessus, when thou hadst begun
Thy task of oxen: heat in more extremes
Than thou wouldst suffer, with his envious beams.
Now make him leave the world to Night and dreams.
Never were virtue's labours so envied
As in this light: shoot, shoot, and stoop his pride.
Suffer no more his lustful rays to get
The Earth with issue: let him still be set
In Somnus' thickets: bound about the brows,
With pitchy vapours, and with ebon boughs.

Rich taper'd sanctuary of the blest,
Palace of Ruth, made all of tears, and rest,
To thy black shades and desolat{.i}on
I consecrate my life; and living moan,
Where furies shall for ever fighting be,
And adders hiss the world for hating me;
Foxes shall bark, and night ravens belch in groans,
And owls shall hollo my confus{.i}ons
There will I furnish up my funeral bed,
Strew'd with the bones and relics of the dead.
Atlas shall let th' Olympic burthen fall,
To cover my untombed face withal.
And when as well, the matter of our kind,
As the material substance of the mind,
Shall cease their revolutions, in abode
Of such impure and ugly period,
As the old essence, and insensive prime:
Then shall the ruins of the fourfold time,
Turn'd to that lump (as rapturing torrents rise),
For ever murmur forth my miseries.

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George Chapman

The Sixth Book Of Homer's Iliads

...

To this great Hector said:

"Be well assur'd, wife, all these things in my kind cares are weigh'd,
But what a shame and fear it is to think how Troy would scorn
(Both in her husbands, and her wives, whom long-train'd gowns adorn)
That I should cowardly fly off! The spirit I first did breathe
Did never teach me that; much less, since the contempt of death
Was settled in me, and my mind knew what a worthy was,
Whose office is to lead in fight, and give no danger pass
Without improvement. In this fire must Hector's trial shine;
Here must his country, father, friends, be, in him, made divine.
And such a stormy day shall come (in mind and soul I know)
When sacred Troy shall shed her towers, for tears of overthrow;
When Priam, all his birth and power, shall in those tears be drown'd.
But neither Troy's posterity so much my soul doth wound,
Priam, nor Hecuba herself, nor all my brothers' woes
(Who, though so many, and so good, must all be food for foes,)
As thy sad state; when some rude Greek shall lead thee weeping hence,
These free days clouded, and a night of captive violence
Loading thy temples, out of which thine eyes must never see,
But spin the Greek wives' webs of task, and their fetch-water be
To Argos, from Messe{i}des, or clear Hyperia's spring;
Which howsoever thou abhorr'st, Fate's such a shrewish thing
She will be mistress; whose cursed hands, when they shall crush out cries
From thy oppressions (being beheld by other enemies)
Thus they will nourish thy extremes: 'This dame was Hector's wife,
A man that, at the wars of Troy, did breathe the worthiest life
Of all their army.' This again will rub thy fruitful wounds,
To miss the man that to thy bands could give such narrow bounds.
But that day shall not wound mine eyes; the solid heap of night
Shall interpose, and stop mine ears against thy plaints and plight."

This said, he reach'd to take his son; who, of his arms afraid,
And then the horse-hair plume, with which he was so overlaid,
Nodded so horribly, he cling'd back to his nurse, and cried.
Laughter affected his great sire, who doff'd, and laid aside
His fearful helm, that on the earth cast round about it light;
Then took and kiss'd his loving son, and (balancing his weight
In dancing him) those loving vows to living Jove he us'd,
And all the other bench of Gods: "O you that have infus'd
Soul to this infant, now set down this blessing on his star:
Let his renown be clear as mine; equal his strength in war;
And make his reign so strong in Troy, that years to come may yield
His facts this fame, when, rich in spoils, he leaves the conquer'd field
Sown with his slaughters: 'These high deeds exceed his father's worth.'
And let this echo'd praise supply the comforts to come forth
Of his kind mother with my life." This said, th' heroic sire
Gave him his mother; whose fair eyes fresh streams of love's salt fire
Billow'd on her soft cheeks, to hear the last of Hector's speech,
In which his vows compris'd the sum of all he did beseech
In her wish'd comfort. So she took into her odorous breast
Her husband's gift; who mov'd to see her heart so much oppress'd,
He dried her tears and thus desir'd: "Afflict me not, dear wife,

With these vain griefs. He doth not live, that can disjoin my life
And this firm bosom, but my fate; and Fate whose wings can fly?
Noble, ignoble, Fate controls. Once born, the best must die.
Go home, and set thy housewifery on these extremes of thought;
And drive war from them with thy maids; keep them from doing nought.
These will be nothing; leave the cares of war to men, and me,
In whom, of all the Ælion race, they take their highest degree."

George Chapman