

Classic Poetry Series

George Gascoigne

- poems -

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A Lover's Lullaby

SING lullaby, as women do,
 Wherewith they bring their babes to rest;
And lullaby can I sing too,
 As womanly as can the best.
With lullaby they still the child;
And if I be not much beguiled,
Full many a wanton babe have I,
Which must be still'd with lullaby.

First lullaby my youthful years,
 It is now time to go to bed:
For crooked age and hoary hairs
 Have won the haven within my head.
With lullaby, then, youth be still;
With lullaby content thy will;
Since courage quails and comes behind,
Go sleep, and so beguile thy mind!

Next lullaby my gazing eyes,
 Which wonted were to glance apace;
For every glass may now suffice
 To show the furrows in thy face.
With lullaby then wink awhile;
With lullaby your looks beguile;
Let no fair face, nor beauty bright,
Entice you eft with vain delight.

And lullaby my wanton will;
 Let reason's rule now reign thy thought;
Since all too late I find by skill
 How dear I have thy fancies bought;
With lullaby now take thine ease,
With lullaby thy doubts appease;
For trust to this, if thou be still,
My body shall obey thy will.

Thus lullaby my youth, mine eyes,
 My will, my ware, and all that was:
I can no more delays devise;
 But welcome pain, let pleasure pass.
With lullaby now take your leave;
With lullaby your dreams deceive;
And when you rise with waking eye,
Remember then this lullaby.

George Gascoigne

And If I Did, What Then?

1 'And if I did, what then?
2 Are you aggriev'd therefore?
3 The sea hath fish for every man,
4 And what would you have more?'

5 Thus did my mistress once,
6 Amaze my mind with doubt;
7 And popp'd a question for the nonce
8 To beat my brains about.

9 Whereto I thus replied:
10 'Each fisherman can wish
11 That all the seas at every tide
12 Were his alone to fish.

13 'And so did I (in vain)
14 But since it may not be,
15 Let such fish there as find the gain,
16 And leave the loss for me.

17 'And with such luck and loss
18 I will content myself,
19 Till tides of turning time may toss
20 Such fishers on the shelf.

21 'And when they stick on sands,
22 That every man may see,
23 Then will I laugh and clap my hands,
24 As they do now at me.'

George Gascoigne

Fie, Pleasure, Fie!

1 Fie pleasure, fie! thou cloyest me with delight,
2 Thou fill'st my mouth with sweetmeats overmuch;
3 I wallow still in joy both day and night:
4 I deem, I dream, I do, I taste, I touch,
5 No thing but all that smells of perfect bliss;
6 Fie pleasure, fie! I cannot like of this.

7 To taste (sometimes) a bait of bitter gall,
8 To drink a draught of sour ale (some season)
9 To eat brown bread with homely hands in hall,
10 Doth much increase men's appetites, by reason,
11 And makes the sweet more sugar'd that ensues,
12 Since minds of men do still seek after news.

13 The pamper'd horse is seldom seen in breath,
14 Whose manger makes his grace (oftimes) to melt;
15 The crammed fowl comes quickly to his death;
16 Such colds they catch in hottest haps that swelt;
17 And I (much like) in pleasure scawled still,
18 Do fear to starve although I feed my fill.

19 It might suffice that Love hath built his bower
20 Between my lady's lively shining eyes;
21 It were enough that beauty's fading flower
22 Grows ever fresh with her in heavenly wise;
23 It had been well that she were fair of face,
24 And yet not rob all other dames of grace.

25 To muse in mind, how wise, how fair, how good,
26 How brave, how frank, how courteous, and how true
27 My lady is, doth but inflame my blood
28 With humours such as bid my health adieu;
29 Since hap always when it is clomb on high,
30 Doth fall full low, though erst it reach'd the sky.

31 Lo, pleasure, lo! lo thus I lead a life
32 That laughs for joy, and trembleth oft for dread;
33 Thy pangs are such as call for change's knife
34 To cut the twist, or else to stretch the thread,
35 Which holds yfeer the bundle of my bliss:
36 Fie, pleasure, fie! I dare not trust to this.

George Gascoigne

Gascoigne's Lullaby

1 Sing lullaby, as women do,
2 Wherewith they bring their babes to rest;
3 And lullaby can I sing to,
4 As womanly as can the best.
5 With lullaby they still the child,
6 And if I be not much beguil'd,
7 Full many wanton babes have I,
8 Which must be still'd with lullaby.

9 First, lullaby my youthful years,
10 It is now time to go to bed;
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20 To show the furrows in my face.
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22 With lullaby, your looks beguile,
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24 Entice you eft with vain delight.

25 And lullaby my wanton will,
26 Let reason's rule now reign thy thought,
27 Since all too late I find by skill
28 How dear I have thy fancies bought.
29 With lullaby, now take thine ease,
30 With lullaby, thy doubts appease,
31 For trust to this, if thou be still,
32 My body shall obey thy will.

33 Eke, lullaby my loving boy,
34 My little Robin, take thy rest;
35 Since age is cold and nothing coy,
36 Keep close thy coin, for so is best.
37 With lullaby, be thou content,
38 With lullaby, thy lusts relent,
39 Let others pay which have mo pence,
40 Thou art too poor for such expense.

41 Thus lullaby, my youth, mine eyes,
42 My will, my ware, and all that was!
43 I can no mo delays devise,
44 But welcome pain, let pleasure pass.
45 With lullaby, now take your leave,
46 With lullaby, your dreams deceive,
47 And when you rise with waking eye,

48 Remember Gascoigne's lullaby.

George Gascoigne

The Night is Near Gone

HEY! now the day dawis;
The jolly cock crawis;
Now shroud is the shawis
 Thro' Nature anon.
The thissel-cock cryis
On lovers wha lyis:
Now skaillis the skyis;
 The nicht is neir gone.

The fieldis ouerflowis
With gowans that growis,
Quhair lilies like low is
 As red as the rone.
The turtle that true is,
With notes that renewis,
Her pairty pursuis:
 The nicht is neir gone.

Now hairtis with hindis
Conform to their kindis,
Hie tursis their tyndis
 On ground quhair they grone.
Now hurchonis, with hairis,
Aye passis in pairis;
Quhilk duly declaris
 The nicht is neir gone.

The season excellis
Through sweetness that smellis;
Now Cupid compellis
 Our hairtis echone
On Venus wha waikis,
To muse on our maikis,
Syne sing for their saikis--
 'The nicht is neir gone!'

All courageous knichtis
Aganis the day dichtis
The breist-plate that bright is
 To fight with their fone.
The stoned steed stampis
Through courage, and crampis,
Syne on the land lampis:
 The nicht is neir gone.

The freikis on feildis
That wight wapins weildis
With shyning bright shieldis
 At Titan in trone;
Stiff speiris in reistis
Ouer corseris crestis
Are broke on their breistis:

The nicht is neir gone.

So hard are their hittis,
Some sweyis, some sittis,
And some perforce flittis
 On ground quhile they grone.
Syne groomis that gay is
On blonkis that brayis
With swordis assayis:--
 The nicht is neir gone.

George Gascoigne

The Steel Glass

...

O knights, O squires, O gentle bloods yborn,
You were not born all only for yourselves:
Your country claims some part of all your pains.
There should you live, and therein should you toil
To hold up right and banish cruel wrong,
To help the poor, to bridle back the rich,
To punish vice, and virtue to advance,
To see God serv'd and Belzebub suppress'd.
You should not trust lieutenants in your room,
And let them sway the sceptre of your charge,
Whiles you, meanwhile, know scarcely what is done,
Nor yet can yield accompt if you were call'd.
The stately lord, which wonted was to keep
A court at home, is now come up to court,
And leaves the country for a common prey
To pilling, polling, bribing, and deceit
(All which his presence might have pacified,
Or else have made offenders smell the smoke).
And now the youth which might have served him
In comely wise, with country clothes yclad,
And yet thereby been able to prefer
Unto the prince, and there to seek advance,
Is fain to sell his lands for courtly clouts,
Or else sits still, and liveth like a lout
(Yet of these two the last fault is the less).
And so those imps which might in time have sprung
Aloft, good lord, and serv'd to shield the state,
Are either nipp'd with such untimely frosts,
Or else grow crook'd, because they be not proynd.

...

EPILOGUS

Alas, my lord, my haste was all too hot,
I shut my glass before you gaz'd your fill,
And, at a glimpse, my silly self have spied
A stranger troop than any yet were seen.
Behold, my lord, what monsters muster here,
With angel's face, and harmful hellish hearts,
With smiling looks, and deep deceitful thoughts,
With tender skins, and stony cruel minds,
With stealing steps, yet forward feet to fraud.
Behold, behold, they never stand content,
With God, with kind, with any help of art,
But curl their locks with bodkins and with braids,
But dye their hair with sundry subtle sleights,
But paint and slick till fairest face be foul,
But bumbast, bolster, frizzle, and perfume.
They mar with musk the balm which nature made
And dig for death in delicatest dishes.

The younger sort come piping on apace,
In whistles made of fine enticing wood,
Till they have caught the birds for whom they birded.
The elder sort go stately stalking on,
And on their backs they bear both land and fee,
Castles and towers, revenues and receipts,
Lordships and manors, fines, yea, farms and all.
What should these be? Speak you, my lovely lord.
They be not men: for why? they have no beards.
They be no boys, which wear such side long gowns.
They be no gods, for all their gallant gloss.
They be no devils, I trow, which seem so saintish.
What be they? women? masking in men's weeds?
With Dutchkin doublets, and with jerkins jagg'd?
With Spanish spangs, and ruffs fet out of France,
With high-copp'd hats, and feathers flaunt-a-flaunt?
They be so sure, even wo to men indeed.
Nay then, my lord, let shut the glass apace,
High time it were for my poor muse to wink,
Since all the hands, all paper, pen, and ink,
Which ever yet this wretched world possess'd
Cannot describe this sex in colours due!
No, no, my lord, we gazed have enough;
And I too much, God pardon me therefore.
Better look off, than look an ace too far;
And better mum, than meddle overmuch.
But if my glass do like my lovely lord,
We will espy, some sunny summer's day,
To look again, and see some seemly sights.
Meanwhile, my Muse right humbly doth beseech,
That my good lord accept this vent'rous verse,
Until my brains may better stuff devise.

George Gascoigne

You must not wonder, though you think it strange

You must not wonder, though you think it strange,
To see me hold my lowering head so low;
And that mine eyes take no delight to range
About the gleams which on your face do grow.
The mouse which once hath broken out of trap
Is seldom teased with the trustless bait,
But lies aloof for fear of more mishap,
And feedeth still in doubt of deep deceit.
The scorched fly which once hath 'scap'd the flame
Will hardly come to play again with fire.
Whereby I learn that grievous is the game
Which follows fancy dazzled by desire.
So that I wink or else hold down my head,
Because your blazing eyes my bale have bred.

□

George Gascoigne