

Classic Poetry Series

**Henry King Bishop of
Chichester**
- poems -

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A Contemplation upon Flowers

O

BRAVE flowers--that I could gallant it like you,
And be as little vain!
You come abroad, and make a harmless show,
And to your beds of earth again.
You are not proud: you know your birth:
For your embroider'd garments are from earth.

You do obey your months and times, but I
Would have it ever Spring:
My fate would know no Winter, never die,
Nor think of such a thing.
O that I could my bed of earth but view
And smile, and look as cheerfully as you!

O teach me to see Death and not to fear,
But rather to take truce!
How often have I seen you at a bier,
And there look fresh and spruce!
You fragrant flowers! then teach me, that my breath
Like yours may sweeten and perfume my death.

Henry King Bishop of Chichester

A Renunciation

o

WE, that did nothing study but the way
To love each other, with which thoughts the day
Rose with delight to us and with them set,
Must learn the hateful art, how to forget.
We, that did nothing wish that Heaven could give
Beyond ourselves, nor did desire to live
Beyond that wish, all these now cancel must,
As if not writ in faith, but words and dust.
Yet witness those clear vows which lovers make,
Witness the chaste desires that never brake
Into unruly heats; witness that breast
Which in thy bosom anchor'd his whole rest--
'Tis no default in us: I dare acquite
Thy maiden faith, thy purpose fair and white
As thy pure self. Cross planets did envy
Us to each other, and Heaven did untie
Faster than vows could bind. Oh, that the stars,
When lovers meet, should stand opposed in wars!

Since then some higher Destinies command,
Let us not strive, nor labour to withstand
What is past help. The longest date of grief
Can never yield a hope of our relief:
Fold back our arms; take home our fruitless loves,
That must new fortunes try, like turtle-doves
Dislodged from their haunts. We must in tears
Unwind a love knit up in many years.
In this last kiss I here surrender thee
Back to thyself.--So, thou again art free:
Thou in another, sad as that, resend
The truest heart that lover e'er did lend.
Now turn from each: so fare our sever'd hearts
As the divorced soul from her body parts.

Henry King Bishop of Chichester