

Classic Poetry Series

John Cleveland

- poems -

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Fuscara, or the Bee Errant (excerpt)

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"But oh! what waspe was't that could prove
Ravilliack to my Queen of Love?
The King of Bees now's jealous grown
Lest her beams should melt his throne...

Live-Hony all, the Envyous Elfe
Stung her, cause sweeter than himself.
Sweetness and she are so ally'd
The Bee committed parricide."

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John Cleveland

On the Memory of Mr. Edward King, Drown'd in the Irish Seas

I like not tears in tune, nor do I prize
His artificial grief that scans his eyes;
Mine weep down pious beads, but why should I
Confine them to the Muses' rosary?
I am no poet here; my pen's the spout
Where the rain-water of my eyes runs out,
In pity of that name, whose fate we see
Thus copied out in grief's hydrography.
The Muses are not mermaids, though upon
His death the ocean might turn Helicon.
The sea's too rough for verse; who rhymes upon 't
With Xerxes strives to fetter th' Hellespont.
My tears will keep no channel, know no laws
To guide their streams, but like the waves, their cause,
Run with disturbance till they swallow me
As a description of his misery.
But can his spacious virtue find a grave
Within th' imposthum'd bubble of a wave?
Whose learning if we sound, we must confess
The sea but shallow, and him bottomless.
Could not the winds to countermand thy death
With their whole card of lungs redeem thy breath?
Or some new island in thy rescue peep
To heave thy resurrection from the deep,
That so the world might see thy safety wrought
With no less miracle than thyself was thought?
The famous Stagirite, who in his life
Had Nature as familiar as his wife,
Bequeath'd his widow to survive with thee,
Queen Dowager of all philosophy:
An ominous legacy, that did portend
Thy fate and predecessor's second end.
Some have affirm'd, that what on earth we find,
The sea can parallel in shape and kind:
Books, arts, and tongues were wanting, but in thee
Neptune hath got an university.

We'll dive no more for pearls; the hope to see
Thy sacred reliques of mortality
Shall welcome storms, and make the seaman prize
His shipwreck now, more than his merchandise.
He shall embrace the waves and to thy tomb
(As to a royaler exchange) shall come.
What can we now expect? Water and fire
Both elements our ruin do conspire.
And that dissolves us which doth us compound,
One Vatican was burnt, another drown'd.
We of the gown our libraries must toss
To understand the greatness of our loss;
Be pupils to our grief and so much grow
In learning as our sorrows overflow.
When we have fill'd the rundlets of our eyes

We'll issue 't forth, and vent such elegies
As that our tears shall seem the Irish Seas,
We, floating islands, living Hebrides.

John Cleveland