

Classic Poetry Series

John Cleveland

- 7 poems -

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John Cleveland (16 June 1613 – 29 April 1658)

John Cleveland was an English poet.

The son of an usher in a charity school, Cleveland was born in Loughborough, and educated at Hinckley Grammar School. Admitted to Christ's College, Cambridge, he graduated BA in 1632 and became a fellow of St John's College in 1634. At St John's Cleveland became college tutor and lecturer on rhetoric, and was much sought after. A staunch Royalist, he opposed the election of Oliver Cromwell as member for Cambridge in the Long Parliament, and lost his college post as a result in 1645. Joining Charles I, by whom he was welcomed, he was appointed to the office of Judge Advocate at Newark. In 1646, however, he lost this office, and wandered about the country dependent on the bounty of the Royalists. In 1655 he was imprisoned at Yarmouth, but released by Cromwell, to whom he appealed, and went to London, where he lived till his death. His best work is satirical, slightly reminiscent of Hudibras; his other poems are considered mediocre. The Poems were published in 1656.

Works:

Poems (1656)

An Elegy On Ben Jonson

WHO first reform'd our Stage with justest Lawes,
And was the first best Judge in his owne Cause?
Who (when his Actors trembled for Applause)

Could (with a noble Confidence) preferre
His owne, by right, to a whole Theater;
From Principles which he knew could not erre.

Who to his FABLE did his Persons fitt,
With all the Properties of Art and Witt,
And above all (that could bee Acted) writt.

Who publique Follies did to covert drive,
Which hee againe could cunningly retriue,
Leaving them no ground to rest on, and thrive.

Heere IONSON lies, whom had I nam'd before
In that one word alone, I had paid more
Then can be now, when plentie makes me poore.

John Cleveland

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."

o

John Cleveland

Mark Antony

Whenas the nightingale chanted her vespers,
And the wild forester couched on the ground,
Venus invited me in th' evening whispers
Unto a fragrant field with roses crowned,
Where she before had sent
My wishes' complement;
Unto my heart's content
Played with me on the green.
Never Mark Antony
Dallied more wantonly
With the fair Egyptian Queen.

First on her cherry cheeks I mine eyes feasted,
Thence fear surfeiting made me retire;
Next on her warmer lips, which when I tasted
My duller spirits made active as fire.
Then we began to dart
Each at another's heart,
Arrows that knew no smart,
Sweet lips and smiles between.
Never Mark Antony
Dallied more wantonly
With the fair Egyptian Queen.

Wanting a glass to plait her amber tresses,
Which like a bracelet rich decked mine arm,
Gaudier than Juno wears whenas she graces
Jove with embraces more stately than warm;
Then did she peep in mine
Eyes' humor crystalline;
I in her eyes was seen,
As if we one had been.
Never Mark Antony
Dallied more wantonly
With the fair Egyptian Queen.

Mystical grammar of amorous glances;
Feeling of pulses, the physic of love;
Rhetorical courtings and musical dances;
Numb'ring of kisses arithmetic prove;
Eyes like astronomy;
Straight-limbed geometry;
In her art's ingeny
Our wits were sharp and keen.
Never Mark Antony
Dallied more wantonly
With the fair Egyptian Queen.

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

The Rebel Scot

How, Providence? and yet a Scottish crew?
Then Madam Nature wears black patches too!
What, shall our nation be in bondage thus
Unto a land that truckles under us?
Ring the bells backward! I am all on fire.
Not all the buckets in a country quire
Shall quench my rage. A poet should be feared
When angry, like a comet's flaming beard.
And where's the stoic can his wrath appease,
To see his country sick of Pym's disease?
By Scotch invasion to be made a prey
To such pigwidgeon myrmidons as they?
But that there's charm in verse, I would not quote
The name of Scot without an antidote;
Unless my head were red, that I might brew
Invention there that might be poison too.
Were I a drowsy judge whose dismal note
Disgorgeth halts as a juggler's throat
Doth ribbons; could I in Sir Empiric's tone
Speak pills in phrase and quack destruction;
Or roar like Marshall, that Geneva bull,
Hell and damnation a pulpit full;
Yet to express a Scot, to play that prize,
Not all those mouth-grenadoes can suffice.
Before a Scot can properly be curst,
I must like Hocus swallow daggers first.
Come, keen iambics, with your badger's feet,
And badger-like bite till your teeth do meet.
Help, ye tart satirists, to imp my rage
With all the scorpions that should whip this age.
Scots are like witches; do but whet your pen,
Scratch till the blood come, they'll not hurt you then.
Now, as the martyrs were enforced to take
The shape of beasts, like hypocrites at stake,
I'll bait my Scot so, yet not cheat your eyes:
A Scot within a beast is no disguise.

No more let Ireland brag; her harmless nation
Fosters no venom since the Scot's plantation;
Nor can our feigned antiquity obtain:
Since they came in, England hath wolves again.
The Scot that kept the Tower might have shown,
Within the grate of his own breast alone,
The leopard and the panther, and engrossed
What all those wild collegiates had cost
The honest high-shoes in their termly fees;
First to the salvage lawyer, next to these.
Nature herself doth Scotchmen beasts confess,
Making their country such a wilderness:
A land that brings in question and suspense
God's omnipresence, but that Charles came thence,
But that Montrose and Crawford's loyal band

Atoned their sin and christened half their land.
Nor is it all the nation hath these sports:
There is a Church as well as Kirk of Scots,
As in a picture where the squinting paint
Shows fiend on this side, and on that side saint.
He that saw hell in's melancholy dream
And in the twilight of his fancy's theme,
Scared from his sins, repented in a fright,
Had he viewed Scotland, had turned proselyte.
A land where one may pray with curst intent,
Oh may they never suffer banishment!
Had Cain been Scot, God would have changed his doom:
Not forced him wander, but confined him home!
Like Jews they spread, and as infection fly,
As if the devil had ubiquity.
Hence 'tis they live at rovers and defy
This or that place, rags of geography.
They're citizens of the world; they're all in all;
Scotland's a nation epidemical.
And yet they ramble not to learn the mode,
How to be dressed, or how to lisp abroad;
To return knowing in the Spanish shrug,
Or which of the Dutch states a double jug
Resembles most in belly or in beard
(The card by which the mariners are steered).
No, the Scots-errant fight and fight to eat;
Their ostrich stomachs make their swords their meat.
Nature with Scots as tooth-drawers hath dealt,
Who use to string their teeth upon their belt.

Yet wonder not at this their happy choice,
The serpent's fatal still to Paradise.
Sure, England hath the hemorrhoids, and these
On the north postern of the patient seize
Like leeches; thus they physically thirst
After our blood, but in the cure shall burst!

Let them not think to make us run o' the score
To purchase villenage, as once before
Call them good subjects, buy them gingerbread.

Not gold, nor acts of grace, 'tis steel must tame
The stubborn Scot; a prince that would reclaim
Rebels by yielding, doth like him, or worse,
Who saddled his own back to shame his horse.

Was it for this you left your leaner soil,
Thus to lard Israel with Egypt's spoil?
They are the Gospel's life-guard; but for them,
The garrison of New Jerusalem,
What would the brethren do? The Cause! The Cause!
Sack-possets and the fundamental laws!

Lord! What a godly thing is want of shirts!
How a Scotch stomach and no meat converts!
They wanted food and raiment; so they took
Religion for their seamstress and their cook.
Unmask them well; their honors and estate,
As well as conscience, are sophisticate.
Shrive but their titles and their moneys poise,
A laird and twenty pence pronounced with noise,
When contrued, but for a plain yeoman go,
And a good sober twopence, and well so.
Hence, then, you proud impostors; get you gone,
You Picts in gentry and devotion;
You scandal to the stock of verse, a race
Able to bring the gibbet in disgrace.
Hyperbolus by suffering did traduce
The ostracism and shamed it out of use.
The Indian that Heaven did forswear
Because he heard some Spaniards were there,
Had he but known what Scots in hell had been,
He would, Erasmus-like, have hung between.
My Muse hath done. A voider for the nonce,
I wrong the devil should I pick their bones.
That dish is his; for when the Scots decease,
Hell, like their nation, feeds on barnacles.
A Scot, when from the gallow-tree got loose,
Drops into Styx and turns a solan goose.

John Cleveland

The Scots Apostasie

Is't come to this? What shall the cheeks of fame
Stretch'd with the breath of learned Loudon's name,
Be flogg'd again? And that great piece of sense,
As rich in loyalty and eloquence,
Brought to the test be found a trick of state,
Like chemist's tinctures, proved adulterate;
The devil sure such language did achieve,
To cheat our unforewarned grand-dam Eve,
As this imposture found out to be sot
The experienced English to believe a Scot,
Who reconciled the Covenant's doubtful sense,
The Commons argument, or the City's pence?
Or did you doubt persistence in one good,
Would spoil the fabric of your brotherhood,
Projected first in such a forge of sin,
Was fit for the grand devil's hammering?
Or was't ambition that this damned fact
Should tell the world you know the sins you act?
The infamy this super-treason brings.
Blasts more than murders of your sixty kings;
A crime so black, as being advisedly done,
Those hold with these no competition.
Kings only suffered then; in this doth lie
The assassination of monarchy,
Beyond this sin no one step can be trod.
If not to attempt deposing of your God.
O, were you so engaged, that we might see
Heav'ns angry lightning 'bout your ears to flee,
Till you were shrivell'd to dust, and your cold land
Parch't to a drought beyond the Libyan sand!
But 'tis reserv'd till Heaven plague you worse;
The objects of an epidemic curse,
First, may your brethren, to whose viler ends
Your power hath bawded, cease to be your friends;
And prompted by the dictate of their reason;
And may their jealousies increase and breed
Till they confine your steps beyond the Tweed.
In foreign nations may your loathed name be
A stigmatizing brand of infamy;
Till forced by general hate you cease to roam
The world, and for a plague live at home:
Till you resume your poverty, and be
Reduced to beg where none can be so free
To grant: and may your scabby land be all
Translated to a generall hospital.
Let not the sun afford one gentle ray,
To give you comfort of a summer's day;
But, as a guerdon for your traitorous war,
Love cherished only by the northern star.
No stranger deign to visit your rude coast,
And be, to all but banisht men, as lost.
And such in heightening of the indiction due

Let provok'd princes send them all to you.
Your State a chaos be, where not the law,
But power, your lives and liberties may give.
No subject 'mongst you keep a quiet breast
But each man strive through blood to be the best;
Till, for those miseries on us you've brought
By your own sword our just revenge be wrought.
To sum up all ... let your religion be
As your allegiance--maskt hypocrisie
Until when Charles shall be composed in dust
Perfum'd with epithets of good and just.
He saved--incensed Heaven may have forgot--
To afford one act of mercy to a Scot:
Unless that Scot deny himself and do
What's easier far--Renounce his nation too.

John Cleveland

Upon Phillis Walking In A Morning Before Sun-rising

THE sluggish morne as yet undrest,
My Phillis brake from out her East;
As if shee'd made a match to run
With Venus, Usher to the sun.
The Trees like yeomen of her guard,
Serving more for pomp then ward,
Rankt on each side with loyall duty,
Weave branches to enclose her beauty.
The Plants whose luxury was lopt,
Or age with crutches underpropt;
Whose wooden carkases are growne
To be but coffins of their owne;
Revive, and at her generall dole
Each receives his ancient soule:
The winged Choristers began
To chirp their Mattins: and the Fan
Of whistling winds like Organs plai'd,
Untill their Voluntaries made
The wakened earth in Odours rise
To be her morning Sacrifice.
The flowers, call'd out of their beds,
Start, and raise up their drowsie heads;
And he that for their colour seekes,
May find it vaulting in her cheekes,
Where Roses mixe: no Civil War
Betweene her Yorke and Lancaster.
The Marigold whose Courtiers face
Ecchoes the Sun, and doth unlace
Her at his rise, at his full stop
Packs and shuts up her gaudy shop,
Mistakes her cue, and doth display:
Thus Philis antedates the day.
These miracles had cramp't the Sunne,
Who thinking that his kingdom 's wonne,
Powders with light his freezled lockes,
To see what Saint his lustre mocks.
The trembling leaves through which he plai'd,
Dapling the walke with light and shade,
Like Lattice-windowes, give the spie
Roome but to peep with halfe an eye;
Lest her full Orb his sight should dim,
And bid us all good-night in him,
Till she would spend a gentle ray
To force us a new fashion'd day.
But what religious Paulsie 's this
Which makes the boughs divest their bliss?
And that they might her foot-steps strawe,
Drop their leaves with shivering awe?
Phillis perceives, and (least her stay
Should wed October unto May;
And as her beauty caus'd a Spring,
Devotion might an Autumne bring)

With-drew her beames, yet made no night,
But left the Sun her Curate-light.

John Cleveland