

**Classic Poetry Series**

# **Mary Barber**

**- poems -**

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## **To a Lady**

WELL you Sincerity display,  
A virtue wond'rous rare !  
Nor value, tho' the world should say,  
You're rude, so you're sincere.  
To be sincere, then, give me leave ;  
And I will frankly own,  
Since you but this one virtue have,  
'Twere better you had none.

Mary Barber

## Written for my Son ... at his First Putting on Breeches

WHAT is it our mamma's bewitches,  
To plague us little boys with breeches ?  
To tyrant Custom we must yield,  
Whilst vanquish'd Reason flies the field.  
Our legs must suffer by ligation,  
To keep the blood from circulation ;  
And then our feet, tho' young and tender,  
We to the shoemaker's surrender ;  
Who often makes our shoes so strait,  
Our growing feet they cramp and fret ;  
Whilst, with contrivance most profound,  
Across our insteps we are bound ;  
Which is the cause, I make no doubt,  
Why thousands suffer in the gout.  
Our wiser ancestors wore brogues,  
Before the surgeons brib'd these rogues,  
With narrow toes, and heels like pegs,

To help to make us break our legs.  
Then, ere we know to use our fists,  
Our mothers closely bind our wrists ;  
And never think our cloaths are neat,  
Till they're so tight we cannot eat.  
And, to increase our other pains,  
The hatband helps to cramp our brains.  
The cravat finishes the work,  
Like bowstring sent from the Grand Turk.  
Thus dress, that should prolong our date,  
Is made to hasten on our fate.  
Fair privilege of nobler natures,  
To be more plagu'd than other creatures !  
The wild inhabitants of air  
Are cloath'd by heav'n with wondrous care :  
Their beauteous, well-compacted feathers  
Are coats of mail against all weathers ;  
Enamell'd, to delight the eye ;  
Gay as the bow that decks the sky.  
The beasts are cloath'd with beauteous skins :  
The fishes arm'd with scales and fins ;  
Whose lustre lends the sailor light,  
When all the stars are hid in night.

O were our dress contriv'd like these,  
For use, for ornament, and ease !  
Man only seems to sorrow born,  
Naked, defenceless, and forlorn.

Yet we have Reason to supply  
What nature did to man deny :  
Weak Viceroy ! Who thy pow'r will own,  
When Custom has usurp'd thy throne ?  
In vain did I appeal to thee,

Ere I would wear his livery ;  
Who, in defiance of thy rules,  
Delights to make us act like fools.  
O'er human race the tyrant reigns,  
And binds them in eternal chains.  
We yield to his despotic sway,  
The only monarch all obey.

Mary Barber

## Written for my Son ... upon his Master's First Bringing in a Rod

OUR master, in a fatal hour,  
Brought in this Rod, to shew his pow'r.  
O dreadful birch ! O baleful tree !  
Thou instrument of tyranny !  
Thou deadly damp to youthful joys !  
The sight of thee our peace destroys.  
Not Damocles, with greater dread,  
Beheld the weapon o'er his head.

That sage was surely more discerning,  
Who taught to play us into learning,  
By graving letters on the dice :  
May heav'n reward the kind device,  
And crown him with immortal fame,  
Who taught at once to read and game !

Take my advice ; pursue that rule ;  
You'll make a fortune by your school.  
You'll soon have all the elder brothers,  
And be the darling of the mothers.

O may I live to hail the day,  
When boys shall go to school to play !  
To grammar rules we'll bid defiance ;  
For play will then become a science.

Mary Barber