

**Classic Poetry Series**

# **Richard Corbet**

**- poems -**

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## **An Epitaph on Doctor Donne, Dean of St. Paul's**

He that would write an epitaph for thee,  
And do it well, must first begin to be  
Such as thou wert; for none can truly know  
Thy worth, thy life, but he that hath lived so.  
He must have wit to spare, and to hurl down;  
Enough to keep the gallants of the town.  
He must have learning plenty; both the laws,  
Civil and common, to judge any cause;  
Divinity, great store above the rest,  
Not of the last edition, but the best.  
He must have language, travel, all the arts,  
Judgment to use, or else he want thy parts.  
He must have friends the highest, able to do,  
Such as Maecenas, and Augustus too.  
He must have such a sickness, such a death,  
Or else his vain descriptions come beneath.  
Who then shall write an epitaph for thee,  
He must be dead first! Let it alone, for me.

Richard Corbet

## The Fairies Farewell

FAREWELL, rewards and fairies,  
Good housewives now may say,  
For now foul sluts in dairies  
Do fare as well as they.  
And though they sweep their hearths no less  
Than maids were wont to do,  
Yet who of late for cleanness  
Finds sixpence in her shoe?

Lament, lament, old Abbeys,  
The Fairies' lost command!  
They did but change Priests' babies,  
But some have changed your land.  
And all your children, sprung from thence,  
Are now grown Puritans,  
Who live as Changelings ever since  
For love of your demains.

At morning and at evening both  
You merry were and glad,  
So little care of sleep or sloth  
These pretty ladies had;  
When Tom came home from labour,  
Or Cis to milking rose,  
Then merrily went their tabor,  
And nimbly went their toes.

Witness those rings and roundelays  
Of theirs, which yet remain,  
Were footed in Queen Mary's days  
On many a grassy plain;  
But since of late, Elizabeth,  
And later, James came in,  
They never danced on any heath  
As when the time hath been.

By which we note the Fairies  
Were of the old Profession.  
Their songs were 'Ave Mary's',  
Their dances were Procession.  
But now, alas, they all are dead;  
Or gone beyond the seas;  
Or farther for Religion fled;  
Or else they take their ease.

A tell-tale in their company  
They never could endure!  
And whoso kept not secretly  
Their mirth, was punished, sure;  
It was a just and Christian deed  
To pinch such black and blue.  
Oh how the commonwealth doth want

Such Justices as you!

Richard Corbet

## **To His Son, Vincent Corbet**

What I shall leave thee none can tell,  
But all shall say I wish thee well:  
I wish thee, Vin, before all wealth,  
Both bodily and ghostly health;  
Nor too much wealth, nor wit, come to thee,  
So much of either may undo thee.  
I wish thee learning, not for show,  
Enough for to instruct and know,  
Not such as gentlemen require  
To prate at table or at fire.  
I wish thee all thy mother's graces,  
Thy father's fortunes, and his places.  
I wish thee friends, and one at court,  
Not to build on, but support,  
To keep thee, not in doing many  
Oppressions, but from suffering any.  
I wish thee peace in all thy ways,  
Nor lazy nor contentious days;  
And when thy soul and body part,  
As innocent as now thou art.

Richard Corbet